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# Postmaterialism in Colombia

## **Abstract**

Colombia has spent decades "under a state of siege" (Amnesty International 5). This fact has become so apparent in their daily lives that the majority of Colombians manage to grow accustomed to social and political instability. Despite the lack of security, therefore, they lessened the emphasis placed on materialistic goods and allowed for the development of postmaterialistic values. According to political scientist Ronald Inglehart, the postmaterialistic state is one in which "a growing emphasis on the quality of life and self-expression is accompanied by a declining emphasis on traditional political, religious, moral and social norms" (Inglehart 66). With this in mind, the fact that Colombians face increasing levels of poverty and political unrest leads many researchers to believe that the presence of postmaterialism without financial stability and personal security is unlikely. However, the demand for women's rights and environmental conservation have taken on a greater role in shaping Colombian society, maintaining this belief therefore leads researchers to wrongly exclude Colombia from studies of postmaterialism. Citizens' desire for environmentalism and women's rights indicates the unlikelihood that the country is completely without postmaterialistic values. Therefore, researchers should use Colombia to study how various societal circumstances determine the degree to which postmaterialism plays a role in individual lives.

# **Postmaterialism in Colombia**

**Gretchen Grabowski**

## **Introduction**

Colombia has spent decades "under a state of siege" (Amnesty International 5). This fact has become so apparent in their daily lives that the majority of Colombians manage to grow accustomed to social and political instability. Despite the lack of security, therefore, they lessened the emphasis placed on materialistic goods and allowed for the development of postmaterialistic values. According to political scientist Ronald Inglehart, the postmaterialistic state is one in which "a growing emphasis on the quality of life and self-expression is accompanied by a declining emphasis on traditional political, religious, moral and social norms" (Inglehart 66). With this in mind, the fact that Colombians face increasing levels of poverty and political unrest leads many researchers to believe that the presence of postmaterialism without financial stability and personal security is unlikely. However, the demand for women's rights and environmental conservation have taken on a greater role in shaping Colombian society, maintaining this belief therefore leads researchers to wrongly exclude Colombia from studies of postmaterialism. Citizens' desire for environmentalism and women's rights indicates the unlikelihood that the country is completely without postmaterialistic values. Therefore, researchers should use Colombia to study how various societal circumstances determine the degree to which postmaterialism plays a role in individual lives.

## **Literature Review**

### **Political Culture and Postmaterialism**

Government officials worldwide are learning that "leading means ... listening closely to what people have to say" (Winston 7-8), and therefore pay increasingly greater attention to the political values, assumptions and attitudes making up a region's political culture. Countries' ability to emphasize postmaterialistic values also to a large extent influences the direction of the public

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opinion comprising a region's political culture. When evaluating the presence of these values within Colombia or any other country, one must understand Inglehart's theories of scarcity and socialization. Scarcity asserts that an individual's priorities reflect his socioeconomic environment, the greatest subjective value being placed on those things that are in relatively short supply. Socialization contends "one's basic values reflect the conditions that prevailed during one's pre-adult years" (Abramson and Inglehart 337). Therefore, citizens only gradually adapt to societal changes. Regardless of the speed at which they are solidified, however, postmaterialistic values indicate the degree to which a country or a specific group within it is economically and politically stable.

Inglehart and Abramson claim "the shift from materialist to postmaterialist priorities ... should occur in any country that moves from conditions of economic insecurity to relative security" (ibid 345). Whether this concept is illustrated through a region's income distribution or the degree to which jobs are equally allocated to society's members, it is likely people living in rich rather than poor countries will possess higher levels of economic security. Germany exemplifies this phenomenon. Following a postwar economic boom, the country's citizens refocused their attention from the attainment of materialistic goods to society's need for freedom of speech (Inglehart 68), indicating a positive correlation between economic standing and postmaterialism. In addition, conservative parties developed a stronghold in the country in the 1940s and 50s, gaining public support previously assured for the left-wing parties. The fact that citizens were willing to overlook conservatives' lack of attention paid and aid given to society's poor sectors likely indicates the presence of a strengthening economy (ibid). It is therefore clear that Inglehart's theory as applied to Germany and other western regions emphasizes the emergence of postmaterialistic values in the absence of materialism. However, the theory does specify that the two can coexist.

Inglehart and Scott C. Flanagan maintain the extent of postmaterialism's presence within a society is "linked with one's having spent one's formative years in conditions of economic and physical security" (Flanagan and Inglehart 1296). However, a shift towards postmaterialism reaffirms the materialistic necessities of economic stability, military security and domestic order while still allowing citizens to work towards such things as environmentalism and the establishment of women's rights. Citizens in developing societies that are given ample time to adjust their

lifestyles to the pressures of economic strain and wavering feelings of security will conform to their oppressive states and nonetheless strive towards achieving postmaterialistic goals (ibid 1309). With this in mind one can come to understand how Colombia, a nation entrenched in civil war, goes beyond satisfying basic survival needs to emphasize postmaterialistic values. The fact remains, however, that internal violence does greatly influence citizens' daily lives and therefore affects the extent to which they become postmaterialistic.

## Societal Conflicts

Among the prominent issues faced by Colombians for the last 37 years are severe violence, a deteriorating economy, and political instability. While close integration with United States economics allows the economies of prominent Latin American countries such as Mexico and Costa Rica to remain strong, Colombia's lack of ties places it in a position of monetary struggle (Lowenthal 42). The country's Gross Domestic Product declined five percent following its 1999 recession, labeled by economists as its worst in 60 years, and unemployment approached 20 percent. This economic decline contributed to the country's having what has been designated the most unstable democracy (ibid). The economic division among societies' rich and poor is so great, the richest 10 percent of the population receiving 37.98 percent of the national income and the poorest 10 percent receiving just 2.74 percent (Osterling 22), that the majority of citizens' daily lives revolve around satisfying basic survival needs. The urban poor do not own their own houses and spend an estimated 61 percent of their monthly income on food, constantly competing with the upper class for societal status (Osterling 40-41). To the detriment of the majority of citizens' quality of life, public officials accept this unequal caste system and make it "difficult, if not impossible, for governments to sustain popular backing for programs that ... seem to enrich a privileged few without providing a credible source of broad prosperity" (Lowenthal 46). This fact contributes to the formation of a political culture that condemns the government and its policies. One must keep in mind, however, that violence prevents the government from implementing policy reforms.

Political parties' inability to compromise results from the conflicts that emerged with the formation of the first democratic government in 1849. The election of conservative Simon Bolivar and liberal Francisco de Paula Santander as the first president and

vice president of the post-independence Colombian Republic sparked political tension between each man's supporters, dividing liberals and conservatives by their opinions on such matters as the Catholic Church's role in state matters. In addition, Colombian social patterns, guerilla activity, and drug-related violence laid the foundations for a security-free environment in which 35,000 people have been murdered in the last 15 years (Amnesty International 1). Colombian parents raise their children to believe that independent thought takes precedence over compromise, often preventing them from learning "limits and respect for others, tolerance for different points of view or the art of losing gracefully" (Osterling 270). They do not see the value in behaving in ways beneficial to the mass public, and therefore experience ideological conflicts that often lead to the violent deaths of loved ones.

In addition, the National Liberation Army and the Revolutionary Armed Forces' status as the country's most powerful rebel groups allow for their designation as primary clients for land and government control in Colombia's system of clientelistic politics. It therefore stands to reason that the government focuses on ensuring citizen safety rather than postmaterialism. More often than not, however, the government's efforts to ensure safety and restore order have failed. The extensive power of both rebel groups led current President Andres Pastrana to not only demilitarize previously protected zones, but also cede their control to the groups' leaders. The negative implications of such occurrences, while present throughout most of Colombian history, are obvious only to those individuals aware of the country's current events.

In the spring of 2001, conflicts between Colombian rebel groups and paramilitaries resulted in "the worst massacre to take place in such a short period of time" (Forero 1). Despite the fact that human rights activists claim the massacre was preventable, the government's late action and the army's failure to immediately respond to the killing spree displaced an estimated 3,000 refugees and caused the death of at least 12 (ibid). Along with this event came the guerrillas' announcement of an alliance between the Revolutionary Armed Forces and the National Liberation Army, an act expected to increase Colombia's already high levels of violence. Exposure to such conflict causes citizens to grow accustomed to instability, a type of devastation with which they have dealt for close to four decades. Through involvement in the autonomous interest and action groups formed by civil society, they can nonetheless adopt postmaterialistic values.

## The Rise of Postmaterialism in Colombia

In countries facing crises of authority, or a loss of a government's legitimacy, a breakdown of order in which the public would rather initiate its own activism than follow authority figures' commands often results (Viotti and Kauppi 7). Such crises of authority occur in Colombia due to the widespread belief that government officials do not effectively confront and put an end to the country's violence-causing conflicts. Citizens take it upon themselves to limit the number of violent crimes that occur each year, realizing that in a country as conflicted as Colombia "civic status may be a matter of life and death" (Brysk 152). Colombia's civic status results from the public's concentration in two primary areas, environmentalism and women's rights, which private groups claim to be just as important as materialistic safety efforts. Environmentalism and women's rights activism are therefore likely indicators of at least partial Colombian postmaterialism.

The fact that their social and political values are comprised of a mix of materialistic and postmaterialistic values make Colombians similar to residents of the majority of countries. 52.2 percent of 3,029 citizens Inglehart surveyed fell halfway between the two extremes, claiming to be neither completely materialistic nor postmaterialistic (Inglehart 171). Postmaterialism is most evident, however, in the areas of women's rights and environmental conservation. As of 1997, 94.1 percent of 2,996 respondents to some extent agreed that "both the husband and wife should contribute to household income" (*ibid* 32). Similarly, 65.4 percent of those surveyed to some extent disagreed that "on the whole, men make better politicians than women do" (*ibid*). Colombians' support for the advancement of women's societal role reflects the political mobilization efforts women began as early as 1932.

In the early 1930s and 40s, females participating in the Colombian women's movement worked to ensure equal opportunities for political involvement. Their continuous assertions that "women's political participation was necessary to ensure a united front against fascism" (Gonzales 693) led women in the Feminine Union of Colombia to take steps toward guaranteeing universal suffrage by 1944. Calling upon women from "all classes, religious beliefs and political affiliations to support suffrage and become involved in civic activities, ... the organization was structured around an executive committee, with subcommittees to assure representation by women of all socioeconomic sectors" (*ibid* 694). In addition to higher voting rates, today's Colombian

women also have greater access to education and political careers. "In fact, as of 1981, a higher percentage of women than of men were enrolled in secondary schools. Women were also increasingly active in the urban workforce, with much of the change coming among the middle class" (Dix 71-72). Combined with Colombians' environmental conservation efforts, this indicates the likelihood that postmaterialism has a prominent societal influence.

In response to Inglehart's question measuring Colombians' willingness to contribute to environmental improvements, 66.9 percent of respondents said they "would agree to an increase in taxes if the extra money were used to prevent environmental damage" (Inglehart 25). The fact that the country contains a vast amount of rainforests is likely responsible for the environment's taking some precedence over citizens' drastically low economic standing. In 2000, the Colombian government planned to use a portion of the United States' \$1.6 billion emergency aid package to fumigate coca plants grown with the environmentally detrimental herbicide glyphosphate (Knight 1). It also took part in civilian organizations' legal battles to prevent oil drilling in areas occupied by the U'wa, an indigenous Colombian group (Ferrer 1). These efforts and those meant to reduce the direct environmental impact of road development place Colombia among the most environmentally conscious Latin American countries. However, the fact remains that in this area of postmaterialism, as in that of women's rights, support for such citizen efforts do not equally extend to all Colombian social and economic groups. Instead, citizens' individual characteristics and societal status determine the degree to which they can pursue postmaterialistic goals.

## Societal Divisions

Research shows that "women play more of a role in politics in Colombia than in any other South American country except Chile" (Gunther 450). However, the fact that they take such an active role in the government, whether through simply exercising the right to vote or holding elected office, comes by means of their own efforts rather than those of men. Although the 1930s and 40s marked a time in which female factions of civil society like the Feminine Union of Colombia fought for equal rights, Colombian men were content to leave women in subservient roles. Their levels of involvement are in fact among the highest in the Latin American region, but the male societal and governmental dominance present since the Colombian Republic's establishment limits women to taking what citizens of western societies



would call a minimal political role. Since 1958 women have held only three to four percent of congressional seats and a slightly higher percentage in the less powerful municipal councils and departmental assemblies, their most important function thought to come during nationwide elections (Dix 113).

Their activism is greatly constricted and "most women's political involvement has heretofore taken the form of roles supporting men. The few women who have come to play important political roles have usually been wives or daughters of prominent political figures" (ibid). Whether it be Berta Hernández de Ospina, who as the wife of one-time President Mariano Ospina led the Pastranista faction of the Conservative Party, or Eugenia Rojas de Moreno, the daughter of former President Gustavo Rojas Pinilla, the most powerful women agree that gender divisions exist (ibid). It is clear that the desire for women's rights and the struggle for obtaining them is a battle fought primarily by Colombian females. However, other societal factors determining the extent of Colombian postmaterialism influence women and men alike. One such factor is income.

The country's strongly skewed income distribution is evidence of the fact that social class distinctions are highly salient in Colombian life. Colombia ranks the highest among 13 Latin American countries in terms of total income going to the top 10 percent of the working population and supports a banking system controlled by one percent of debtors. It is a prime example of a country in which an extremely uneven income distribution allows a small upper class to dominate the much larger lower class (ibid 69). Their career choice and level of economic affluence forces even the elite to separate themselves into five economic groups, therefore making it clear that the poor citizens' striving for minimum monetary security separates them that much farther. Therefore, "generalizations about class, status and power are very difficult to make in Colombia – as in any other nation – given the country's regional differences, because each region has its own social and economic structure" (Osterling 338). This individualism, which extends from economics to education, is likely responsible for researchers' inability to generalize the impact of postmaterialism across all Colombian citizen groups.

Colombia's government "encourages higher education as the most efficient means to achieve social mobility" (ibid 270), and utilizes strict selection criteria in the college admissions process. Only two percent of citizens between the ages of 20 and 24 enrolled in, let alone graduated from, a Colombian university. They comprise an estimated two-thirds of the country's economic

power holders (Dix 69). However, with the exception of children between the ages of 6 and 12, who Colombian law requires to attend primary school, the majority of society's lower-class citizens view education as a "relatively scarce commodity" (ibid) reserved for the elite. This pronounced overlap between income and education explains that the lower the income level of a Colombian family the less likely it is that children continue education beyond the American equivalent of the sixth grade. Attendance at the secondary level borders 55 percent, as families with older children rely on them for additional household income (Morrison 75). Children's education is also restricted because economically desolate citizens inhabit rural areas without access to schools of the same quality as the elite (ibid). Therefore, because students can only move on to higher education upon completion of secondary-level courses, members of the lower class lack access to education's "narrow avenue to power, influence and jobs for the privileged few" (Osterling 279). With this data as well as that concerning gender and income in mind, it becomes clear that the various divisions among Colombians limit the development of postmaterialistic values to specific citizen groups.

## **Research Design**

### **Hypotheses**

Those citizens who achieve the greatest stability and are the most accustomed to oppressive circumstances are among the most likely to become postmaterialistic. It is therefore probable that researchers' studies will confirm the following hypotheses:

**H1:** Levels of postmaterialism will increase with age.

This prediction coincides with Inglehart and Flanagan's theory that citizens who grow accustomed to oppressive circumstances will nonetheless incorporate postmaterialistic values into their daily lives. Older members of society experienced Colombia's economic plights and political violence longer than the younger generation and are therefore more likely to accept the conflicts and allow themselves to become postmaterialistic.

**H2:** Women are more postmaterialistic than men.

This prediction comes as a result of the fact that women, more so than men, made efforts to initiate and expand upon the

goals of the women's rights movement. From the 1930s to the present women worked to provide Colombian females with the opportunity for large-scale political involvement, something that many men failed to see as a salient issue.

**H3:** People with high incomes are more postmaterialistic than people with low incomes.

In accordance with Inglehart's theory, citizens of any country are more likely to become postmaterialistic if they have achieved financial security. Therefore, while the Colombian poor must concentrate on attaining basic survival items, economic stability allows wealthy factions of society to focus more attention on such postmaterialistic issues as women's rights or the environment.

**H4:** Citizens will become more postmaterialistic as their level of education increases.

The strong correlation between income and education implies that postmaterialism will increase in proportion with one's level of education. If citizens in Colombia are financially secure, they will be more likely to pursue higher education and therefore become more capable of adopting postmaterialistic values.

## **Operationalization and Procedures**

The full extent of Colombia's postmaterialism, and subsequently the accuracy of the aforementioned hypotheses, is determined with the analysis of citizens' responses to questions included in Ronald Inglehart's World Values Surveys. The 6,025 Colombian residents included in the survey process were questioned during the country's third wave of development, a period spanning from 1995 to 1997, and responded to inquiries concerning their beliefs on such things as governments' role in society and the extent to which various human rights influence their daily lives. While both are thought to indicate the degree of one's postmaterialistic values, however, some beliefs about human rights provide more insight into a state's stability than others. Colombia's postmaterialistic tendencies reflect citizens' influence on environmentalism and women's rights.

With this in mind, three ordinal-level dependent variables included in the World Values Surveys served as the best indicators of Colombian postmaterialism. Citizens' overall postmaterialistic tendencies were measured in accordance with a four-item postma-

terialism index. Those of the 6,025 individuals responding to the majority of questions were ranked on a three-item scale averaging their degree of postmaterialism. Those thought to hold the greatest number of postmaterialistic values were postmaterialists while those in the middle of the spectrum were classified "mixed" and those holding little or no such values were materialists. In terms of environmental and women's rights, questions used in this analysis asked individuals to specify the degree to which they were willing to increase environmental spending and believed women could make effective politicians. Both used a four-item scale in which respondents ranked themselves on a scale from strongly agreeing to strongly disagreeing with a statement, determining whether one "would agree to an increase in taxes if the extra money were used to prevent environmental damage" (Inglehart 25) and if, "on the whole, men make better political leaders than women do" (ibid 32). Those citizens willing to donate money to environmental improvements were likely postmaterialistic as one would expect the country's economic devastation to prevent such an occurrence.

Similarly, the Colombian women's rights movement centered on increased political involvement, therefore justifying a measurement of citizens' confidence in women's ability to hold public positions. However, an accurate representation of the value system required the use of four independent variables, the nominal-level variable of gender, and the interval-level variables measuring age, income and education, as each has a likely affect on one's ability to pursue postmaterialism. In accordance with the hypotheses presented as well as the coding of each variable, one would expect that correlation coefficients for the index and women's rights be positive and the environmental correlation coefficient be negative.

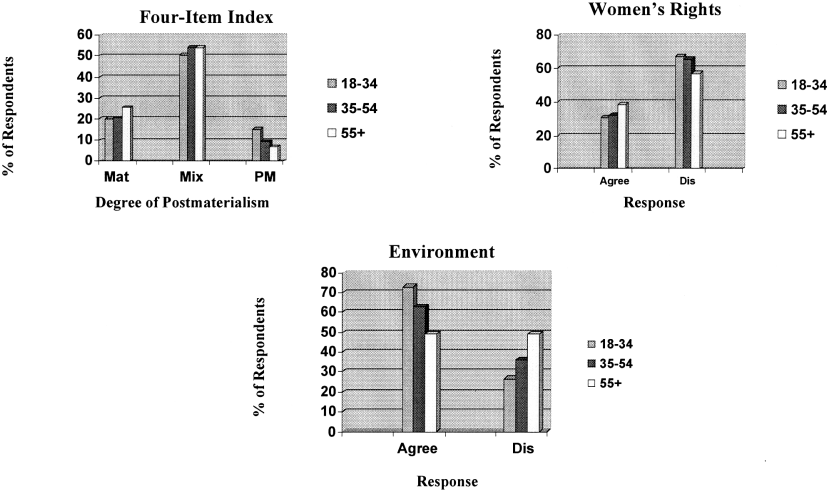
Categorical age, income, and education groupings were used throughout the data collection process in order to minimize the degree of separation among respondents. The three age groups employed included one for those between the ages of 18 and 34, a second for those 35 to 54 and a third for those 55 and above. In terms of income, respondents ranked themselves on a scale of one to ten, one representing little or no economic security and ten representing the highest level of such. Their answers led to their grouping in categories which consisted of those in the one to four ranking, a second for the five to seven ranking and a third for the highest eight to ten ranking. Much the same was done in terms of the Colombians' education, as respondents having some high school education or less comprised one category, those with

some type of college preparatory training were grouped in a second category and respondents with university-level education and beyond were placed in a third category. These categorical divisions simplified the process of gathering initial percentage divisions for each independent variable, but were eliminated when performing measures of association and two-tailed regressions to provide for increased accuracy.

Data Analysis

Potential problems in the data collection process arose because many of the 6,025 respondents failed to answer several questions included in Inglehart’s survey. 50.3 percent of respondents were ranked in the postmaterialism index, and only 49.7 percent of individuals provided responses to the questions measuring the extent of Colombian environmentalism and women’s rights. In addition, finding questions to which any of the original group of respondents were willing to respond was a difficult task. The 12-item postmaterialism index was completely eliminated from the survey and the environmental inquiry pertaining to tax increases was the only one out of nine measuring such values for which responses were recorded. Nonetheless, statistically significant results more often than not both confirmed and refuted the hypotheses.

Age



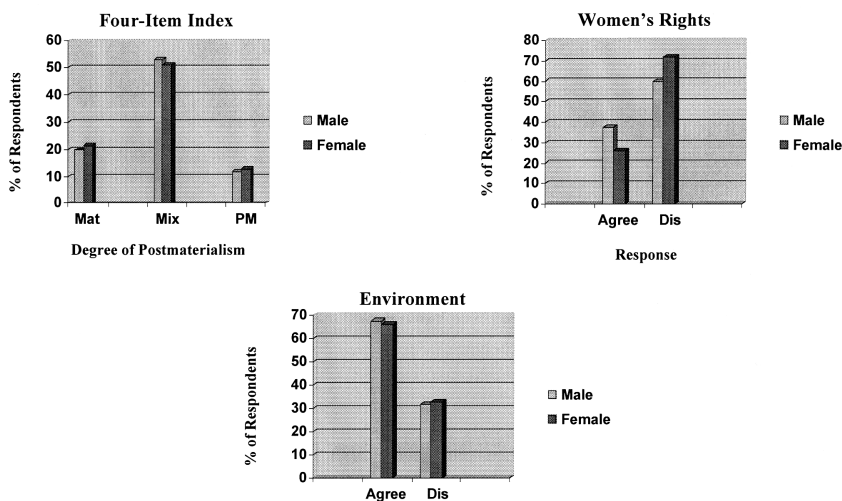
Contrary to the original hypothesis, young Colombian citizens hold values more postmaterialistic than those of the elderly. In terms of overall postmaterialism, 20 percent of 18 to 34-year-olds compared to 25.4 percent of those 55 and over were materialistic. In the same regard, 15.2 percent of the younger generation considered themselves postmaterialistic while the same can be said for only seven percent of the elderly. Similarities between the two are only apparent among those considered "mixed," as over 50 percent of respondents from each age group hold values that are partially materialistic and partially postmaterialistic. Nonetheless, regardless of the data's disproving the hypothesis that Colombia's postmaterialism will increase with age, the fact remains that researchers can have a high degree of confidence in the findings.

Spearman's correlation coefficients for each of the dependent variables were small, ranging from  $-.073$  for the postmaterialism index, to  $-.042$  for female political involvement, to  $.147$  for one's willingness to monetarily contribute to environmental improvements. However, this weakness does not take away from the results' significance. Citizens' responses to the questions comprising the postmaterialism index as well as that which measures their environmentalism each had a statistical significance of  $.000$ , conveying that researchers could have confidence at the one percent level that overall postmaterialism as well as Colombians' willingness to pay greater environmental taxes will decrease as citizens become older. Similarly, they can be confident at the five percent level that older citizens more so than the young believe men make better politicians, as the correlation coefficient for such has a significance of  $.022$ . Inglehart's socialization hypothesis explains such findings, conveying elderly Colombians' longer exposure to violence and economic insecurity has less of an influence on their beliefs than the values with which they were raised.

The socialization hypothesis "implies that neither an individual's values nor those of a society as a whole are likely to change overnight. Instead, fundamental changes in values take place gradually, almost inevitably, as a younger generation replaces an older one" (Inglehart 69). There are no positive correlations between satisfaction of one's survival needs and an increased emphasis on a higher postmaterialistic need, as one's values are typically cemented and difficult to change once he reaches adulthood (ibid). Through their longtime exposure to the violence of the country's 37-year-long civil war and the economic disparities among society's rich and poor, elderly Colombians do grow accustomed to societal oppression. However, it is through their familiarity with this oppression that they allow socialized

materialistic values to persist rather than "seek satisfaction in other realms" (Inglehart 882). According to several political scientists, the daily violence in Colombia "operates on the basis of the direct personal business of people in their strictly private lives" (Camacho 257). Colombian elderly, viewed as society's weakest members, are incapable of standing up to the challenges such violence poses, and for this reason act on behalf of their own physical welfare rather than challenge the existing social order. These actions, which to some extent also influence the degree to which all gender, income and education groups pursue postmaterialistic values, include protecting the rights to life, property and settling of accounts (ibid) that violent rebel confrontations threaten.

## Gender



The results of statistical tests measuring gender's influence on the presence of postmaterialistic values revealed the likelihood that societal circumstances outside of one's gender status have a greater affect on the degree to which Colombians become postmaterialistic. Women's overall postmaterialistic tendencies do rank higher than that of men, as according to results shown by the four-item postmaterialism index. 12.6 percent of women as opposed to 11.9 percent of men are considered postmaterialists. However, materialistic women also outnumber materialistic men 21.5 to 19.7 percent. The fact that their differences lie with the respondents claiming to have mixed values demonstrates that both men and women are more or less equally postmaterialistic. The difference in the males' 53.1 percent mixed rating and the 51.2



percent female rating of such likely contributes to the slight separation in the degree to which each gender group can be categorized as materialistic or postmaterialistic. Clearer divisions are noticeable when analyzing individual indicators of Colombians' value system.

71.8 percent of female respondents as opposed to 59.7 percent of male respondents disagree that males make better politicians, showing that in this case women are more postmaterialistic. However, the fact that 33 percent of women compared to 31.8 percent of men disagree with proposed tax increases shows that men are in some cases more postmaterialistic than women. However, regardless of the individual findings for each dependent variable, that which is used as an indicator of women's rights is the only source of confidence. The chi-square value of such was 85.485, there were four degrees of freedom and chi-square's significance was .000. This indicates that results are significant at the one percent level. The index's chi-square had a value of 2.235, three degrees of freedom and a significance of .657. Lastly, environmental taxation's chi-square value was .438, there were four degrees of freedom and a significance of .979. Therefore, both the index and environment questions' results indicate little or no confidence can be had in the correlation between gender and postmaterialism. The fact that guerilla warfare equally influences men and women cancels out the genders' respective income inequalities.

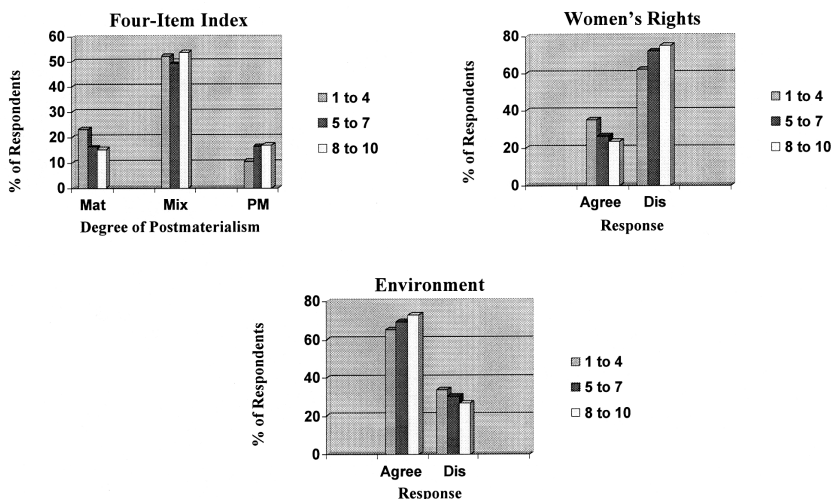
In terms of warfare and violence, it should be noted that Colombia has one of the highest murder rates in the world. Individuals live in an environment in which no one is safe. "From the scavenger killed so his corpse can be chopped up and sold on the black market for body parts to the topmost politician murdered to deliver a warning to the government, the violence touches all sectors of Colombian society (Amnesty International 1)." Whether citizens are considered among the ranks of thousands that die each year as a result of guerilla and paramilitary violence or are harassed and kidnapped by the Revolutionary Armed Forces and National Liberation Army, their gender has little influence on the extent of the conflict encountered. Guerilla organizations kidnapped more than 1,700 men and women between 1989 and 1991, holding them "in extremely harsh conditions. They may be bound and blindfold for weeks at a time, given insufficient food and exercise, inadequate medical attention and forced to live with the constant fear, and sometimes the explicit threat, of physical injury or death" (ibid 73). It therefore stands to reason that the men and women who manage to escape



the violence or survive its infliction make equal efforts to protect themselves, their families and assets. Where equality is lacking, however, is in the distribution of career opportunities.

In recent years Colombia's high levels of unemployment pushed many residents to migrate from rural to urban areas in search of higher quality, better paying jobs. By 1980 and continuing to the present the labor force was predominantly urban, with 21 percent employed in industry and 53 percent in services (Dix 73). However, the fact remains employers reserve jobs for select groupings. Colombian women, although brandishing slightly higher levels of secondary and university education, were systematically excluded from the growing urban work force since the 1970s. In 1978 urban male workers outnumbered females 72 to 38 percent, a gap which has since lessened but still remains wide (ibid 72). Therefore, it is likely females' inability to obtain the same jobs and salaries as their male counterparts contributes to their unwillingness to support tax increases.

### Income

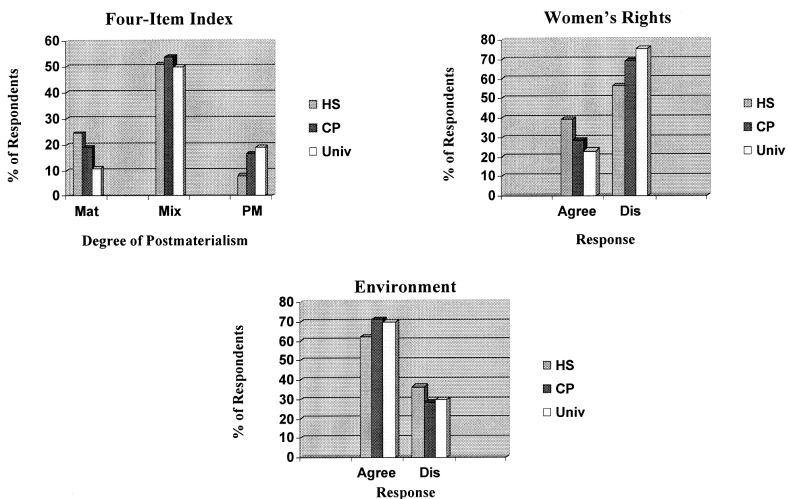


Statistical analyses confirm Colombian citizens become more postmaterialistic as their incomes increase, a finding consistent with the hypothesis proposed in this paper as well as in that of Ronald Inglehart's "The Rise of Postmaterialist Values." In terms of their overall postmaterialistic tendencies, postmaterialistic elite in the eight to ten income grouping outnumber those in the economically unstable one to four grouping 16.7 to 10.4 percent. They are 13.1 percent more likely to pursue women's rights

and 7.9 percent more likely to admit a willingness to gear more tax dollars towards the environment. Spearman's correlation coefficients for each indicator of postmaterialism, ranging from the index's value of .093, to the women's rights value of .094, to environmental taxation's value of -.098, are all substantially weak, yet significant. Each of the three indicators has a statistical significance of .000, conveying that researchers can maintain confidence in the relationship between income and postmaterialistic values through the one percent level. The confirmation of the proposed hypothesis results because Colombians behave in accordance with Inglehart's assertion that, "as a rule, we would expect prolonged periods of high prosperity to encourage the spread of postmaterialistic values" (Inglehart 68).

Unlike the 40 percent of Colombian citizens living in absolute poverty and earning an average per capita income under US \$300 (Osterling 23), the financial security of society's elite allow them to pursue postmaterialistic goals at a high rate. The Colombian government is known for its unequal treatment of citizens in accordance with income levels and attends "primarily to the needs of the wealthy, influential and privileged minorities (ibid 338)." The fact that the elite can have confidence in the government's ability to provide for their basic survival needs allows them to focus on the pursuit of postmaterialistic goals meant to further enhance their quality of life. This occurs simultaneous to the economically deprived classes' struggle to survive with a "deep resentment and dissatisfaction against the government and the influential elites" (ibid) that provide the underlying reason for their tighter budgets.

## Education



Findings for education's affects on postmaterialism are consistent with the original hypotheses' assertions that one's post-materialistic values increase with education. Overall levels of postmaterialism increase from a total of 7.8 percent among those who received some high school education or less to 19.1 percent among those who attended Colombian universities. Similarly, those with the fewest years of educational training were 19 percent less likely to disagree with the proposed statement that men make better politicians than women, conveying their weaker focus on women's rights. An increase in one's willingness to pay extra taxes for environmental improvements also increases with education, but is perhaps more clear among those with average rather than high levels of education. Those with average education levels in favor of tax increases outnumber those with little education having the same feelings 71.3 to 62.1 percent while those with university educations only outnumber them 70 to 62.1 percent. The likelihood that Colombia's deteriorating economy encourages highly skilled and educated individuals to become more protective of their assets can explain this small percentage decrease. Nonetheless, researchers can have confidence in the statistical findings.

Less than average Spearman's correlation coefficients describe the three indicators of postmaterialism, totaling .135 for the four-item index, .134 for the women's rights variable and -.168 for that of the environment. Strong significance, .000 in each category, accompanies the correlations and indicates confidence in the findings at the one percent level. Society stresses the importance of high levels of education and the social and economic benefits that come with such an achievement, likely explaining educated individuals' ability to pursue a greater amount of postmaterialistic goals.

Expansion of educational programs is one of the Colombian government's greatest accomplishments. Since 1958, the number of citizens enrolling in institutions of higher education increased each year and literacy rates also drastically improved. However, despite these advances "the wide disparities in educational access and quality remain between the social classes and the urban and rural areas" (Dix 192). Educational expenditures are "notably biased in the elitist and urban direction" (ibid), gearing a higher percentage of the national budget towards the students attending national universities than the primary and secondary school students making up the majority. The skewed funding contributes to the educated citizens' greater security and thus opportunity for social mobility as the educated are "better placed

to exert pressure for social change" (ibid).

Regressions

Four-Item Index

Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	F	Significance
.001	1.566	.181

Variable	B	Beta	t	Sig.
Education	4.011E-02	.038	2.036	.042
Income	-2.894E-03	-.020	-1.098	.272
Age	-5.312E-04	-.012	-.662	.508
Gender	-4.249E-02	-.008	-.443	.658

Women's Rights

Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	F	Significance
.007	6.091	.000

Variable	B	Beta	t	Sig.
Gender	.215	.085	4.625	.000
Income	2.494E-02	.022	.985	.325
Education	1.432E-02	.020	.847	.397
Age	-5.410E-02	-.005	-.272	.768

Environment

Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	F	Significance
.034	27.717	.000

Variable	B	Beta	t	Sig.
Age	.106	.127	6.830	.000
Education	-6.087E-02	-.106	-4.616	.000
Income	-1.958E-02	-.022	-.992	.321
Gender	9.849E-04	.000	.027	.978

Two-tailed regression analyses reveal that the statistical significance of the measures of disappears when independent variables come together in a regression model. Nonetheless, correlations reported in terms of each independent variable's ability to predict the occurrence of postmaterialistic dependent variables, statistical significance returns for those having the greatest importance. Standardized Beta values indicate this importance. As can be expected, the variable with the greatest significance in predicting one's promotion of women's rights is gender, and those with the greatest significance in determining one's willingness to support increased environmental taxation are age and education.

Since the 1930s, Colombian women fought for involvement in society's social and political spheres. However, male resistance prevents the full accomplishment of this goal, as several believe "women will not make use of the vote, and if they do, nothing will be won and much will be lost" (Gonzalez 690). It is likely that age gains its significance in terms of the environment because the younger generation partially relies on environmental maintenance for future quality of life. In addition to their realizing the importance of creating "environmentally friendly" modernized road networks, young Colombians more so than the old

work to prevent the "attack on the ancestral rights of the indigenous community" (Ferrer 2) that comes with rural oil drilling. The elderly, as established by the socialization hypothesis, are more concerned with those needs directly related to economic survival (Inglehart 68). In the same regard, environmental appreciation likely increases with education because formal schooling causes a greater awareness of environmental degradation's negative impacts. Through the knowledge gained in science and other related courses one realizes "spilling more than 1.7 million barrels of crude oil into waterways and the soil" (Ferrer 2) has long term implications detrimental to the overall health and well being of the citizens.

Education's influence on postmaterialistic values is also important in explaining the index's regressions. Its statistical significance and relationship with other independent variables may be partially responsible for the regression's overall .181 insignificance and income's standardized Beta sign reversal. Contrary to the measure of association's confirming the assertion that greater postmaterialistic values accompany high levels of income, the weak correlation's standardized Beta value of  $-.020$  conveys that as income increases one can expect society's postmaterialistic values to decrease. One possible explanation for this lies in the fact that there is a strong positive correlation between Colombians' income and education. 78.3 percent of the survey's respondents fall within the lowest four of ten income groupings, and 54.6 percent of the respondents in such groups only have some high school education or less. Spearman's correlation coefficient of  $.416$ , significant with a value of  $.000$  at the one percent level, confirms that researchers can have a substantial amount of confidence in these findings and makes possible the assertion that those with higher incomes are more protective over the education their financial security provides. This conservative behavior would therefore lead to less postmaterialism. However, truth in this assertion could only be confirmed if education's standardized Beta levels were also negative. The fact that it is positive conveys that societal factors are more important than individual characteristics in determining postmaterialistic values.

It is likely that the regression model's finding that postmaterialism decreases with increasing income levels can be attributed to the economic instability and internal violence characteristic of Colombia. The Colombian government greatly succumbs to rebel-dominated patron-client relationships in an effort to maintain high levels of support and minimize conflict, but in doing so neglects the needs of its socially – and economically – deprived

citizens. "The hundreds of deaths caused by the various types of guerrilla warfare, the dozens of kidnappings for ransom money, along with the production and trafficking of drugs have become the worst contemporary enemies of Colombian democracy" (Osterling 343). Therefore, many do not have access to the safety and monetary security necessary for survival. It stands to reason that those who do acquire security focus more attention on maintaining it rather than on pursuing postmaterialistic goals.

### **Conclusion**

Colombian citizens' development of postmaterialistic goals is to some extent limited by the civil war infringing upon individuals' rights to safety and security. However, regardless of the degree of peril faced, "violence has become a depersonalized phenomenon of daily life as people have become almost numb to it" (ibid 264). It is through this numbness that Colombians choose to pursue postmaterialism in the form of environmentalism and women's rights. If postmaterialism thrives in the struggling Colombia, it is likely that researchers can to some extent apply Inglehart's theory to all developed and underdeveloped countries. The theory of postmaterialism lends itself to a greater comparative research process in which the application of its points in one region provides for greater understanding of the world at large.

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